

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Memorial Day Weekend—Summer Under the Oak Tree

This memorandum expires [30 May 2005](#).

1. The Memorial Day holiday period, 28 - 31 May, is a time to honor our fallen comrades and to recognize the sacrifices of the Soldiers defending our great Nation today. This holiday period also marks the traditional beginning of summer, which is historically the most dangerous time of year for us.

2. The safety record for USAREUR and the Army as a whole during the summer months has not been good over the last 5 years. The fatality rate is high, and it continues to climb. If history repeats itself, USAREUR could lose 25 Soldiers to accidents by the end of September.

3. USAREUR recently lost two good Soldiers in tragic vehicle crashes, one involving a motorcycle and the other a privately owned vehicle. Alcohol and lack of judgment were factors in these accidents. While it is always painful when one of our Soldiers dies, it is especially tragic when one of them is killed in a crash that could have been prevented.

4. Leaders at all levels must get involved and make the tough choices needed to keep our people safe. We must go beyond simply giving pre-weekend and pre-holiday safety briefings. First-line supervisors must be actively involved in planning Soldier leaves and passes, and must reach an in-depth, joint understanding and agreement with Soldiers. This process—what I call a “meeting under the oak tree”—involves two tiers and is especially important for Soldiers going on block leave after prolonged deployments. I do not want our NCOs to issue approved leave forms and passes until Soldiers have completed both tiers.

a. The first tier requires unit leaders to present a safety briefing at a company / platoon-level assembly. During this briefing, unit leaders will make very clear to Soldiers exactly what hazards they face and what they must do to protect themselves.

b. The second tier involves squad-level / first-line supervisor NCOs sitting down and making “verbal contracts” with Soldiers. Junior leaders are in the best position to talk to Soldiers about safety. These leaders will ask their Soldiers to provide specific information about their leave plans, jointly assess risks with their Soldiers, and have Soldiers agree to take specific measures to ensure their safe return. This meeting is necessary regardless of the Soldier’s destination,

transportation arrangements, or planned activities. NCOs will not allow Soldiers to depart on leave or pass until they are fully satisfied with the Soldier's "contract."

5. In addition to the requirements above, leaders will identify high-risk Soldiers using standard assessment processes according to [Army Europe Command Policy Letter 3](#). Commanders will ensure that all Soldiers in their unit have been formally assessed before 25 May 2004. After assessments are completed, leaders must review them before each meeting under the oak tree and update them if necessary.

6. Families and friends also play an important role in keeping Soldiers safe. One way they can help make a difference is by taking part in Operation Guardian Angel. The USAREUR homepage provides information on this program.

7. Help make this first weekend of summer our safest ever—Soldier hard, Soldier safe—and take care of yourselves as we execute with excellence, Any Mission, Anywhere.

/s/
B. B. BELL
General, USA
Commanding

DISTRIBUTION:

CDR, V CORPS, UNIT 29355, APO AE 09014-9355
CDR, 21ST TSC, UNIT 23203, APO AE 09263-3203
CDR, USASETAF, UNIT 31401, BOX 49, APO AE 09630-0049
CDR, 5TH SIG CMD, CMR 421, BOX 2001, APO AE 09056-2001
CDR, 7ATC, UNIT 28130, APO AE 09114-8130
CDR, 7TH ARCOM, UNIT 29238, APO AE 09102-9238
CDR, 266TH FINCOM, UNIT 29001, BOX 15, APO AE 09007-0015
CDR, 1ST PERSCOM, UNIT 29058, APO AE 09081-9058
CDR, 66TH MI GP, UNIT 28614, BOX 4, APO AE 09177-0004
CDR, 202D MP GP, UNIT 29291, APO AE 09102-9291
CDR, ERMIC, CMR 402, APO AE 09180
CDR, ERDC, CMR 442, BOX 812, APO AE 09042-0812
CDR, AAFES-EUR, UNIT 29804, BOX 51, APO AE 09056-0051
DCG/CofS, USAREUR/7A, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
DCofS, USAREUR/7A, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
SGS, HQ USAREUR/7A, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
G1, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
G2, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351

G3, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
G4, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
DCSENGR, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
G6, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
G8, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
CH, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
CPA, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
CSURG, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
IG, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
JA, USAREUR, UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351
PM, USAREUR, UNIT 29931, APO AE 09086-9931

CF:

DIR, IMA-EUROPE, UNIT 29353, BOX 200, APO AE 09014-0200

MEETING UNDER THE OAK TREE

1. Before weekends and holidays, and before Soldiers go on pass or leave, first-line officers / noncommissioned officers (NCOs) will give a safety briefing, and first-line NCOs will meet with each Soldier to discuss the Soldier's off-duty plans. This process, called "Meeting Under the Oak Tree," ensures that leaders are aware of their Soldiers' plans and are able to discuss the risks associated with those plans. It also ensures that the first-line leader / supervisor is able to make a verbal contract with the Soldier in which the Soldier agrees to take steps to mitigate those risks. Soldiers will not be granted pass or leave until they discuss their plans with their first-line NCOs and a "safe behavior contract" is reached between the NCO and his / her Soldier.

2. Memorandum, HQ USAREUR/7A, AEAGA-S, 10 May 2004, subject: Memorial Day Weekend—Summer Under the Oak Tree, established the "Meeting Under the Oak Tree" requirement. This memorandum complements and must be used with the individual risk-assessment requirements of my Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3, enclosure 4.

3. The Off-Duty Risk Assessment is on the USAREUR Safety Web site. The verbal "Meeting Under the Oak Tree" contract meets the separate, off-duty risk assessment requirement prescribed by Army in Europe Command Policy Letter 3, enclosure 4, paragraph 2c.

4. In addition to making a verbal contract, Soldiers will complete a driver's risk-assessment questionnaire in conjunction with their first-line NCO. The purpose of this questionnaire is to establish the Soldier's basic risk indicators for subsequent reference by the first-line NCO. This questionnaire is on the USAREUR Safety Web site. The questionnaire must be downloaded before it can be used. Once downloaded, the questionnaire must be completed for each Soldier. When necessary, first-line leaders will require Soldiers to complete the questionnaire again to maintain currency.

5. Before "Meeting Under the Oak Tree," the NCO will review the Soldier's risk assessment. In open, honest conversation, the NCO and the Soldier will then discuss the Soldier's plans. The Off-Duty Risk Assessment will be used to guide the discussion.

a. The Soldier is responsible for disclosing his or her plans and perspective of the risks involved.

b. The Soldier and the NCO are jointly responsible for—

(1) Identifying additional risks and procedures for mitigating the risks.

(2) Making a verbal agreement on a course of action for the period, and any contingency plans.

c. NCOs will not allow Soldiers to go on pass or leave until satisfied that the risks have been identified and sufficiently mitigated, and the Soldier and NCO have a verbal agreement.

d. The Soldier is responsible for executing the verbal contract and following the risk-assessment and risk-management process as conditions affect the contract.

e. Battalion leaders are responsible for verifying the integrity of this process and ensuring that Soldiers are held accountable.